

How to Train Your Dragon: Battle for Valhalla

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Summary: Sequel to Hiccup's Fate. As Berk enjoys an unprecedented 12 year peace, a sinister force breaks out of Hel. It's purpose: to dethrone Odin and unleash a dark secret kept by the gods since the beginning of time.

1. Chapter 1

Disclaimer: I do not own How to Train Your Dragon nor anything associated with it.

Chapter 1

Peaceful Birthday

It was the sunlight streaming through the window onto her face that woke Astrid. The woman stirred, her eyes scrunched up in defiance of the bright light. She rolled over out of the light's path, and thought of going to sleep when she realized two things. One, her husband, official Chief-in-training Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III was not in their bed. Two, a very delicious and mouth-watering aroma had wafted into the room from downstairs.

Astrid sat up, her long blonde hair that reached halfway down her back falling haphazardly all over the place. She yawned before walking to the mirror in their room. She glared at what she saw. It was a good thing Hiccup was the only one to ever see her like this, because she would never hear the end of it if one of their friends spotted her in her white nightgown, her hair looking like it had been through a hurricane. The woman swiftly grabbed the brush off of the nearby nightstand and, with a frustrated sigh, began to brush her hair back into order.

A few minutes later, just as the woman started searching for her boots, a soft knock came from the door. The Viking crossed the room and opened it, thinking that it might be Hiccup. So, when there was

no one at her eyelevel, she looked down. A five-year-old boy with blonde hair and blue eyes stared up at his mother, a wide grin plastered on his face.

"Hiya Mommy!" The little boy exclaimed happily, "Happy birthday!" He held out a white flower for her to take.

"Thank you, Saber. You know, these are my favorite flowers. Do you know what they're called?" She smiled at her son as he shook his head in anticipation of the answer, "They're called astrids."

"Hey! That's your name Mommy." Saber pointed out happily.

"Yep, I was named after this flower," the Viking mother twirled the flower in her hand before asking Saber what was happening downstairs. Her son gladly grabbed her hand and led her to the kitchen and dining room.

The room was alive with noise. Water boiled in a cauldron over a crackling fire, the Haddocks' eight-year-old daughter Asta was busy chopping up vegetables to be added to the stew with the help of her elder brother Finn, Toothless and Prince hungrily and viciously attacked a pile of fish, and Saber was trying to tell his father that he had given Astrid the flower. Hiccup was at the dinner table entertaining their youngest child, one-year-old Hiccup Horrendous Haddock IV, or Hic for short.

Astrid smiled when she realized where the flower came from. A vase full of astrids now sat on the table. She put the flower back in the vase and looked to the man responsible for the gift. She turned just in time to hear Hiccup grunt in pain while the infant laughed. Hic's hands were full of his father's hair, and the baby was laughing at the sound emitted from the older Viking when he tugged on the hair.

The baby's mother picked him up, causing him to relinquish the painful hold on his father. Hiccup rubbed his head and looked up at Astrid. Their eyes met, and Hiccup gave Astrid his classic, goofy grin.

"Happy birthday," he whispered.

"Thank you," she responded and leaned in.

Their kiss was met with a round of "Bleghs," from the children. The parents separated and chuckled. Hiccup smiled at them and said, "You guys will understand someday, trust me." His children gave them unconvincing looks before returning to their various activities.

Astrid took a seat at the table next to Hiccup, while Saber climbed in the seat beside her. While they waited for breakfast, Hiccup and Astrid discussed their plans for the day. The couple hadn't been able to spend much time together for a while, now that Hiccup was busy training to replace his father as Chief of the tribe. So, Hiccup took the day off. He planned to take Astrid for a flight on Toothless to a prearranged location for lunch between the two of them, and then they could have a sparring match, something Astrid had wanted to do for a long time. That night he planned to take her for a walk and have a small celebration amongst their family and close friends. At least,

that's what he told her. Astrid had no idea that Hiccup had a surprise up his sleeve.

Finn and Asta came back, placing breakfast on the table. Hiccup watched as the children took their seats and dug in, admiring the happy family he and Astrid created. Finn had his mother's blonde hair, though he kept it in a style similar to his father's. He had also inherited her blue eyes. His parents' small frames showed themselves in the boy, but they weren't enough to completely block the Viking gene. Already they could tell that he would grow up to be bigger than his father. As the eldest of his siblings and as future leader of the tribe, he was responsible, or tried to be. He, along with his brothers and sister, were benefitting from their parents' skills. Astrid drilled Finn and Asta in hand-to-hand combat, while Hiccup gave them flying lessons. Saber and Hic would each begin their training at eight.

Asta was the spitting image of her mother. She also had her mother's fiery and tomboyish attitude. She was a trouble maker. Sometimes Hiccup felt that she was too attached to Ruffnut, and that the woman was rubbing off on her. But, when she wanted to be, the girl was a princess, sweet and kind.

When they had Finn, Hiccup and Astrid both agreed that the traditional way of naming their children was pretty silly, and decided to give their offspring more 'normal' names. With Saber, the parents relented to Stoic's persistence and met him halfway. Saber was very innocent and playful, and had inherited his father's creativity. The Viking astounded the adults in the village at the places he could get to.

Even at one, Stoic said that Hic was the spitting image of Hiccup, and thus very deserving of his name. The child was awfully attached to the dragons, which were rather overprotective of the young Haddock. Toothless and Prince had to practically follow the baby everywhere to prevent him from getting into trouble, but Hic was sneaky, and sometimes still escaped.

Together, the four could be a formidable force of mischief. Asta was usually the instigator, coming up with some crazy plan for a stunt of prank. Saber would follow her blindly, while Finn tried to err on the side of caution. But, when his sister proved too stubborn to be swayed, he often gave in and took over, refining Asta's plan to prevent utter disaster and minimize chances of harm. No one could explain how, but Hic always managed to be in the right place at the right time to play a key part in their schemes.

Astrid and Hiccup had changed too in the last twelve years, but only slightly. That was a strange think about the village of Berk, people didn't age normally. The older you were, the slower you aged. The villagers themselves chalked it up to either a blessing from the gods for their triumph over the evil Aries, or some sort of side effect from the spell that had once held them bound in terrible suffering. So, though Hiccup and Astrid were both twenty-seven, they had the bodies of nineteen-year-olds. Astrid looked very much like she once did, just older and, to the unanimous agreement of the village, more beautiful. Hiccup on the other hand grew up quite a bit more. He now stood almost a full head taller than his wife, with a shadow of facial hair growing on his chin. He was also more muscular now than he once was. He wasn't a lumbering hulk like other Vikings, but he

was definitely more Viking-ish.

The Viking family finished their meal, and Finn and Asta went to cleaning the dishes. There was a knock at the door, and Hiccup opened it to reveal Stoic, Gobber, and Gobber's Terrible Terror. The children ran to their grandfather, who laughed as he scooped them all up in one big hug. They greeted Gobber and shouted their excitement at seeing his Terror. Saber and Hic especially loved playing with a dragon closer to their size. The Terror, familiar with the four Haddock children, tried to run. He was stopped short as Toothless blocked his path, grinning smugly at him. Prince latched on to the end of his tail, hoisted him up, and dropped the smaller dragon practically in Saber's arms.

Hiccup laughed as the small dragon resigned himself to his fate. He let Toothless out and thanked Stoic and Gobber for helping Prince watch the kids while he and Astrid were on their date. The couple walked outside into the sunlight, where they were eagerly beckoned by the Night Fury, who wanted to fly so bad he couldn't stay still.

"Alright Buddy, be patient," Hiccup said as he and Astrid climbed on. The blonde attached their basket of food to a clip on Toothless' harness while Hiccup slid his prosthetic in place. Toothless spread his wings, and Hiccup leaned forward, waiting for the familiar feel of Astrid's arms around his waist.

"Bye Mom, bye Dad!" Finn called to them.

"Have fun on your date." Asta added. Saber joined them in waving to their parents, who waved back before the Night Fury launched into the sky.

The comforting sound of beating wings and whistling air filled their ears. Despite the increased cold as the wind rushed past them, the heat generated from their bodies was more than enough to keep the Vikings warm. Astrid leaned into Hiccup, her head on his shoulder and her eyes closed, enjoying the mixture of emotions of being on a dragon ride with her husband. Hiccup felt the familiar, and by now almost natural, thrill of flight while enjoying the comforting presence of his wife's heartbeat as she held herself tightly to him. The Viking felt sort of guilty for not being able to spend very much time with her as he used to. His training, as well as teaching his regular flying lessons, was really demanding. He was grateful to be able to take the day off for this day at least.

Toothless banked around, giving the couple a full view of their home. The dragon continued his turn, flying higher towards the clouds. He and Hiccup knew how Astrid loved the feel of the cloud as it flowed through her hand. As they came over the village, the two waved at a couple of other airborne Vikings. Soon, the scenery below turned from streets and buildings to a never-ending stream of trees. The group flew back and forth over the island, enjoying the ride for hours. Then, they flew back out towards the shore, and the dragon and master decided to put on a show for the birthday girl.

They were high above the island now; with random clouds passing in between them and the water. Astrid's eyes were closed again, so she didn't see as Toothless' wings folded tighter and tighter to his body. It wasn't until she began to feel that exhilarating drop in her

stomach that the Viking opened her eyes and found herself looking straight at the water below. The sound of the dragon's wings was now replaced by the telltale whistle of the Night Fury diving from the sky. Hiccup and Astrid both whooped as adrenaline pumped within their bodies.

The water was approaching fast, so Hiccup pulled Toothless out of the dive. The black dragon was still moving with incredible speed, so Astrid also got to enjoy the rollercoaster as her husband and their friend moved in and out of the rocks with ease. Once they cleared the rocks, Toothless slowed down and regained altitude.

Now their destination was in sight. Astrid could see the grassy outcrop jutting out from the forest. Toothless landed smoothly on the grass, and waited for the couple to retrieve the basket and their weapons before starting to frolic around the taller blades of greenery.

Hiccup and Astrid laughed at the dragon's antics while they set up lunch. The two watched Toothless pull stunts and odd mimics and impressions of Vikings they knew. Hiccup and Astrid would reward each stunt and impression with a fish, in order to tide the dragon over until they returned. Afterwards, the couple found themselves stretched out on the grass, staring up at the sky. Hiccup was resting his head on one hand, while the other was wrapped around Astrid, whose head was making good use of Hiccup's shoulder as a pillow. For a time, they just laid there, the only sounds being the wind, the water below, and Toothless' snoring.

"What are you thinking about?" Hiccup asked.

Astrid snuggled closer to him before answering, "I was just thinking about the way things were. You know, before you saved the village the first time."

She didn't see Hiccup's face as he wondered what would make her think of that, but he went along with it anyway, "Yeah, I was a toothpick loser back then that couldn't do anything right to save my life."

While Hiccup's words contained some truth, Astrid didn't like her husband's negativity, "But you were still the same person on the inside as you are now, just not asâ€|"

"Old?" Hiccup asked.

"Experienced," Astrid shot back.

Hiccup was silent for a moment as he searched for something clever to say. When he spoke again, his words were accompanied by an air of mock arrogance, "Of course, I'm a lot better now than I was then. I'm stronger, faster, 'experienced'. Heck, I can even beat you in a duel now."

Astrid raised her eyebrows in surprise and lifted her head to look at him, "And since when has that happened?"

Hiccup half chuckled, half scoffed, "It's been that way for years, you know that."

Astrid laughed and sat up, "I don't know who has been filling your head with these fantasies, Hiccup, but it definitely wasn't me."

Hiccup playfully scoffed again, "C'mon, you're just afraid to admit that I would win."

Astrid gave him a look that let him know that she was onto him, "Is that a challenge?"

Hiccup mirrored her look, "That depends, on whether you are willing to accept defeat or not."

"Ohhhoho," Astrid retorted as they rose to their feet, "you've done it know Hiccup! Prepare to be whipped."

"Not if I whip you first!" Hiccup shouted as they raced for their practice weapons. Toothless, who had been watching their wordy contest with an amused and somewhat disinterested look on his face, now gazed intently at the fighters as they took their places.

"Ready Hiccup?" Astrid shouted.

"More than you'll ever be," the man taunted, riling his wife up even further.

The corners of the woman's mouth turned upward in a cocky and devilish grin. "You asked for it," she whispered.

Both warriors let loose their battle cries as they ran forward. The dull blades of Astrid's ax and Hiccup's sword sent showers of sparks raining down on the grass with every impact. They moved with ever increasing speed, both so determined to not give up space that they moved in a very slow circled, their blades flashing in between them.

Toothless had seen this before in their sparring matches. This had two ways of ending: one, the frenzied duel would fizzle out and die, or it would explode into an intense, all-out fight in which bystanders could be endangered by the crossfire.

When both of them suddenly jumped back at the same time, weapons ready, the dragon knew it was going to be the latter. Astrid leapt forward, her ax raised over her head. She brought it down on Hiccup's blade, but her momentum carried her body into him. The two collapsed on the ground, and after a short wrestling match they rolled away to grab their weapons.

Hiccup rolled to one knee and raised his sword in time to deflect Astrid's weak and frantic blow. The male Viking attempted to counter with his own attack, but Astrid parried. They got to their feet and attacked again, their weapons locking in between them. The couple spun away from each other, each preparing their next strike.

Toothless watched with interest as the duel seemed to transform into some sort of weird dance. The fighters were using the exact same moves at the exact same time, constantly canceling each other out. The way they moved slowly began to look more and more elegant as the fight progressed.

The dragon's stomach growled, bringing him out of his intense gaze. The fight may have been excellent, but he was hungry. So, when the fighters drew closer to him, the Night Fury nonchalantly stuck out his tail, causing Astrid to trip and fall over backwards with Hiccup falling on top of her.

Hiccup stopped himself before his face smacked into hers, but they were only centimeters apart. The Vikings froze as they got lost in each other's eyes, unable to tell if their shortness of breath was from the duel or their close proximity.

Astrid smiled up at Hiccup "When did you get so good?"

"Told ya," Hiccup tried to restrain a laugh.

"We'll call it a draw," Astrid said.

This time he had to laugh, "Whatever you say, it is your birthday."

"I love you, Hiccup."

"I love you too, Astrid."

The space between them vanished in an instant as they shared their passionate kiss. Toothless, whose stomach was now having fits, rolled his eyes at the couple. When it was clear that they didn't plan on stopping anytime soon, the dragon gave a sort of bark, reminding them that he was there. The Vikings separated and looked up at the Night Fury in surprise.

"Sorry Toothless," Hiccup said, "I guess we got kind of carried away there."

Toothless growled in agreement and nodded toward the horizon, where the sun was beginning to set. Husband and wife looked at the shrinking sun in shock, it hadn't felt like they had been out there that long. Quickly, they gathered up the weapons and the basket and hopped on the saddle on Toothless' back. The dragon spread his wings, and they took to the sky again.

The sun was almost gone by the time they reached the village. The darkness cast by the buildings' massive shadows was now being filled with light by fires and lit torches. Toothless landed on the grassy hill next to their house. Hiccup got off first and offered Astrid his hand, helping her down. They turned around just in time for Prince, Astrid's parents, Gobber, and the kids to come pouring out of the house.

"Mom! Dad!" The children shouted as they ran into their parents' arms. The group was walking back inside when Snotlout appeared, completely out of breath. It took a minute for the winded Viking to catch his breath before speaking.

"Hiccup! Stoic already left, they said they needed your help to over at the Magus Village."

Hiccup looked surprised and shocked, "Why?"

"I don't know, chief business I guess," Snotlout said.

"But I took the day off."

"I know, I know," Snotlout continued, "but they said it was urgent."

Hiccup and Astrid turned to each other, causing the woman to miss the wink Snotlout gave the other Vikings and the dragons. Hiccup's look told Astrid he needed to go, and hers almost convinced him to stay.

"I'm sorry," Hiccup said sincerely, "I will make it up to you, I promise."

Astrid glared at him, "Fine."

Hiccup jumped on Toothless and swiftly vanished into the night sky. Astrid watched them go; once again missing the excited looks being exchanged between her family and friends. Astrid's mother and father approached the woman, who was obviously hurt.

"C'mon," her mother said, "let's go for a walk. Gobber and Prince can watch the kids."

Astrid reluctantly agreed. The three of them walked down the street, Astrid so miserable that she was oblivious to the lack of other people around and to the fact that Prince and her parents' blue Monstrous Nightmare were following them on the rooftops. So, it makes sense that she didn't catch the signal her mother flashed to them.

There was a sudden beating of wings, and Astrid was swiftly pickup from the ground in the talons of her Nadder. She shouted in surprise as the village rapidly shrank and fell away.

"Prince!" The Viking woman shouted, "Where are you taking me?" No sooner had she said this before her parents flew up alongside her.

"Enjoying the ride?" her father asked jokingly.

"Mom, Dad, do you know what's going on?"

"Sorry Honey," her mother answered, "We can't say."

"What!" Astrid was very confused. Fortunately, they had arrived at their destination. Astrid recognized the pond where Hiccup had first kidnapped her so long ago as they descended towards it.

When they landed, Astrid got to her feet, looking around in bewilderment. Why had they come here? Her question was soon answered as several torches were lit simultaneously, bringing to light a huge crowd that was packed in the shadows. The whole village was there, and with one voice they shouted their congratulations.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY ASTRID!"

Astrid was at a loss for words. She just stared dumbstruck at the Vikings until she felt a hand on her shoulder. Astrid looked up to

see Hiccup's smiling face. Suddenly realization dawned on her, and she noticed Stoic, Snotlout, and her family were all gathered at the front of the crowd.

The blonde turned back to her husband and punched him in the arm. The other Viking grimaced and rubbed it while she spoke.

"That's for tricking me." Hiccup opened his mouth to respond, but she cut him off as she wrapped her arms around his neck, "And this is for everything else." She pressed her lips to his, and the "Awe's" of the crowd drowned out their children's "Blegh's." When their lips separated, Hiccup rested his forehead on hers.

"Happy birthday, Astrid." He said.

"Thank you, Hiccup." She replied.

The villagers shouted for joy, and turned to celebrating. The party lasted well into the night. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves as thoughts of the happy and peaceful present filled their minds. None of them were aware of the dark events to come, just as none of them were aware that, at that moment in a place far beyond the realm of Man, all "Hel" had quite literally just broken loose.

Here's the first chapter. I'm not good at being creative with names, so I tried to give the kids traditional Viking names. I still need to name Snotlout and Ruffnut's daughter if anyone has any ideas. I'll update soon. Please review!

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2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

The Forces of Hel

Odin sat upon his throne in his silver palace, Valaskjalf, deep in thought, a grim look on his face. The eye patch over his eye served as reminder of what he had seen when he sacrificed it in order to see the apocalyptic battle of Ragnarok. What he saw then was completely different from what he viewed now as the realm of the dead fell into chaos.

The doors of the throne room opened, and four soldiers marched in, another being chained in between them. They stopped before the throne, the soldiers kneeling, forcing their chained prisoner to kneel with them. With a nod from the King of the Gods, the guards removed the shackles that held their prisoner bound. They then stepped back and gave Odin an unhindered view of the prisoner.

Even for a god, Loki looked remarkably well for the amount of time he was forced to suffer in his imprisonment. The God of Mischief had a very long and bushy white beard that hid his rather young complexion. He wore nothing but a loin cloth, and now looked at Odin, confused as to why he had been freed.

Just as Odin was about to speak, the door opened again. Sigyn, Loki's wife, ran into the room, closely followed by several guards. Odin

waved them away, and allowed Sigyn to join her husband before the throne. There was a moment of silence before Loki spoke.

"Oh great Odin! Why have you freed me?" The god asked in a mocking tone.

"Now is not the time for jokes or insults, Loki," Odin answered, "I have freed you because events are taking place that could mean the destruction of all life as we know it."

"And why should that be any concern of mine?" Loki asked, the arrogance in his voice not having dimmed in the slightest.

Odin leaned forward, a small smirk on his face, "The dead have risen from the realm of Hel, and now march in endless numbers towards our destruction."

Loki's mocking grin widened at the news, "Ah, my daughter has finally gained the sense to resist you! I am so proud."

Odin had to resist the smile that tried to show itself upon his face. He knew that the next bit of news would crush Loki's gleefulness, "No Loki. Your daughter, Hel, was slain by one of the dead she ruled. Her murderer no leads the forces of Hel."

Just as he expected, the smile faded from Loki's face. He was visibly shocked, his wife looked worried as she tried to console him, but the god ignored her. He looked at Odin, whose face returned to being grim and serious, searching for any hint of a lie.

"No," Loki said, "Impossible. How could she be slain by a mortal, a dead one at that?"

"The human that killed her is unlike any I have ever seen. He has found some way to retain his body as it was in life, as well as his twisted powers. His objective is unclear, but he is a very skilled combatant, and the armies of the dead now follow him mindlessly."

For once, Loki was genuinely humbled. He looked up at the King, his eyes now filled with anger, "Let me lead a force against them, I will slay this murderer."

Odin gave him a look of approval, "That is why I have freed you. Take your sons, Fenrir and Jormungand, and go to Jotunheimer, that is where you will stop them."

So, here Loki stood, in the land of the giants, at the head of an army of giants, elves, dwarves, and a small detachment of Valkyries. On his right stood the massive canine Fenrir; on his left was the serpent Jormungand.

Loki himself had shaved and cut his hair. He wanted to look as intimidating as possible, and he felt that the beard and long hair depicted frailness. He adorned green armor and a green cape. In one hand he held a sword with a razor sharp blade, and a silver shield in the other. His face was emotionless, hiding the anger that raged within his heart.

Loki's force stood arrayed on a large hill. Behind them a vast forest

ended halfway up the slope. Before them was another, slightly smaller hill. This one was crowned by many rocks and large boulders, which Loki hoped would slow their opponents' advance. They could hear the clamber of thousands of feet and the clank of armor as the opposing force approached from beyond the smaller hill.

The soldiers from Hel appeared over the crest of the hill and sprinted down the other side. Loki was forced to act quickly in order to catch them before they got too close. At his command, the sky was filled with arrows. The cloud of deadly missiles was so thick it blotted out the sun. They fell upon the enemy, but did no visible damage to the swiftly approaching tide.

Loki raised his sword and prepared to lead a charge, but as he did so, for some reason his sight was drawn to specific rock on the other hill. There, he could see a single figure walking calmly onto the boulder, which jutted straight out of the ground over the moving mass of soldiers around him. This figure wore a black cloak, which hid his face from view. It was evident that under the dark cloth he wore black armor. In one hand he held a sword with a black blade, while the other was empty. The god felt the enemy commander's eyes connect with his own from underneath the hood, and fury flowed through his veins like water from a broken dam.

The two sides met with a tremendous crash. It was immediately evident to Loki why the arrows had so little of an effect on the enemy. The enemy soldiers were mostly nothing but bones, their skeletal figures sustained little damage from the missiles. Some still had the wooden shafts jutting from their armor as they entered the fray. Loki himself went up against such a creature, easily severing both of its arms and a leg. However, even after it fell, the skeleton tried to worm its way forward to bite at the god's feet. Loki stomped on the skull, reducing it to dust, and the bones ceased all movement.

Loki made his way across the battlefield, his ancient experience and skill far outmatching the undead soldiers. Once, the god clashed with an opponent adorned in full body armor, with a visor shielding his face. This enemy showed more skill than the skeletons, and more speed and intelligence than their zombie counterparts. However, it was still nothing compared to Loki. His sword cleaved the helmet easily away, only to reveal that there was nothing there. Slowly, a ghostly and transparent figure shimmered into sight within the armor. Loki cut the armor to ribbons, and the phantom disappeared, leaving the armor lifeless on the ground.

A high shriek brought his attention to the sky. There he saw the Valkyries dueling with incorporeal beings in ragged, black cloaks. The creatures had black hands, some armored, some just mottled flesh and bone. They carried any of a myriad of weapons, but seemed to favor scythes. They battled the Valkyries with skill far beyond any of the ground troops, enough to cause the female warriors to fall back.

Overall, the forces Loki led were by far more skilled than their enemy, with an exception to the wraiths. Despite this great advantage, Loki could tell that they were losing. No matter how many of the enemy soldiers fell, three more arrived to take their place. The dead were overwhelming the living with sheer numbers, swarming over everything.

Loki snapped out of his reverie to notice the predicament he was in. He looked around and found that he was surrounded by the enemy. They slowly pressed inward, closing the small pocket around him. Suddenly, as if they all had the same thought at the same time, the dead started to charge forward.

Before they could run even a few steps, the evil ranks were crushed beneath the force of two giant beasts. Jormungand struck like a giant, green, scaly bolt of lightning, dismantling all the bony figures on Loki's left, while Fenrir tore through them on his right. The giant dog and snake growled and hissed menacingly at their foes as they moved away from the trio, deciding to take part in the battle somewhere else.

A shadow fell swiftly across Loki and his sons, causing them to quickly jump out of the way of a falling giant. The towering man crashed to the ground, his last breath escaping him. His head landed mere feet from where Loki stood, and the god watched as a black, cloaked figure presented itself as it walked across the dead giant's forehead. Loki and his sons stepped back, preparing to fight their new foe.

Now that he was so close, Loki could tell that there was definitely something different about his daughter's murderer. This man walked with an air of confidence, evil and power seeming to seep from him. He stopped after stepping onto the grass, dark red blood dripping from his black blade. His voice was deep and cold when he spoke.

"Loki, the God of Mischief, the wolf Fenrir, and the serpent Jormungand; so, Odin sends his enemies against me to test my strength. He is very clever. Are you lot really blind to his trick?" The hooded man asked.

Loki glared at him as he raised his sword, "Trick or not, you will meet your end here. I will make you pay for what you did to Hel."

The man chuckled slightly, "Tsk, tsk. Don't make the same mistake she did. She assumed that I would be nothing more than a worm to her, and yet I am here and she is not. You would be wise to join me, Loki, not fight me."

"I've had enough of this," Loki spat, "kill him."

Jormungand struck first, his body a blur as his lightning-fast reflexes brought him to his enemy's position within a second. However, all he got was a mouthful of dirt. Pain seared across his neck as the mysterious attacker dug his blade into the snake's scales. He swiftly withdrew the sword and jumped into the air as Fenrir attempted to bite him off of Jormungand's neck. The man landed on Fenrir's head, and somehow sent a large ball of fire from his hand into the giant wolf's back. Fenrir howled in pain as the flames burned hair and skin.

The man jumped from the wolf's head to the ground below, where he quickly engaged Loki in a fierce duel. Several times Loki tried to break away so that his sons had enough room to strike, but his opponent was quick and stayed right on his tail. Their blades sent showers of sparks and chips of metal flying with each blow.

Finally, Loki found an opportunity to strike. Before his opponent could prepare to block the attack, the god plunged his sword into the enemy's chest, right where his heart would be. The man gasped and staggered back, his face turned to the sword jutting from his body. He fell to his knees, and disappeared into Jormungand's mouth as the snake struck again. At first, the snake turned to his father for his approval, but then he began to writhe in pain. The snake lifted his head into the air, where it completely detached from the rest of his body. The man jumped from the remains of the serpent as its body crashed into the ground. He landed in front of Loki, the god's sword in one hand, and his own in the other.

"Ha ha ha ha," The man laughed, "Did you really expect that to kill me. You can't kill me with such mundane means Loki, because I am already dead."

In the blink of an eye, he was in front of the god, stabbing Loki with his own sword. The God of Mischief collapsed, gasping for breath. He watched with increasingly blurring vision as his opponent turned, firing some sort of black cloud of swirling dark matter at Fenrir. However, he did not live long enough to see what the cloud did.

The black cloud hit Fenrir in the side, and it spread along his body, abandoning the somewhat spherical shape it had held. A large gash formed at the point of impact, and the gas began seeping into his body through it. The wolf suddenly convulsed, his mouth opened to emit some sort of noise, but nothing came out. The burned flesh from the previous attack suddenly got much darker, and he fell to the ground. The man watched the life leave Fenrir's eyes before looking around.

The remains of Loki's army were now in full retreat. Giants with Valkyries flying around their heads could easily be seen running from the battlefield, while the elves and dwarves were concealed by the trees. Though they could have pursued the defeated army tirelessly, the man silently commanded his soldiers to halt. It was unnecessary to chase the crippled force. Now nothing stood between him and Midgard, the realm of Man.

Sorry it took so long, I had a small case of writer's block with this chapter. For a while, I was considering skipping it because of how short it would be, but I decided against it. I'll update again soon. Please review!

Darkguymelef

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Peace's Swift Decline

"Whoohoo!" Hiccup shouted, his voice echoing off the mountainside.

He and Astrid had taken to the snowy peak on the island with their dragons to slide down the white slope. It was a beautiful, clear day.

The fact that they could see all the way down the mountain to the village and ocean below and to the rush of adrenaline that flowed through their veins. Hiccup laughed at the sense of euphoria filling his body. His laugh was cut short, however, when he received a face full of snow.

Astrid and Prince were trying to make themselves as small as possible. As the air resistance decreased, the pair increased in speed. As they passed by Hiccup and Toothless, both Viking and Nightfury were sprayed with snow. Astrid smirked to herself and Prince cackled when the other pair fell even farther behind. Then, a familiar whistle reached their ears. Astrid looked over in shock as a black blur shot past them, barely even touching the snow.

"Hiccup!" Astrid called, "What are you doing? You're going too fast!"

But Hiccup was already beyond hearing. He and Toothless almost floated down the mountain, maneuvering around rocks and trees with ease. He was lost in the flight, until he started to become light-headed. Suddenly the view before moved out of focus, and just as quickly flashed back, and then again, but this time the scenery changed. For a second, Hiccup found himself flying down the side of the mountain, the village below him a giant cloud of fire, smoke, and the weaving bodies of dragons and wyverns. Then everything flashed back to normal, only to again transition to the battle from years ago, but this time they were being chased by the massive black dragon and its evil master.

Astrid watched in horror as Toothless and Hiccup began to drift off to the right, at first coming farther off the ground, and then turning back towards it. Toothless realized something was wrong, and tried to spread his wings to slow them down. Then, Hiccup passed out, causing them to crash into the snow. The duo tumbled through the snow, without any sign of stopping, until Toothless latched onto a nearby tree and caught his Viking friend with his tail.

Astrid was halfway off of Prince by the time he landed next to the Nightfury. She scrambled over to where he lay, rolling him over so she could get a good look at him. She gasped as she saw blackness weaving its way through his veins suddenly retreat towards his shoulder. The blonde moved his clothing away and watched as the blackness retreated to one central point and disappeared. As soon as it did so, Hiccup shot up, wide awake.

"Hiccup," Astrid breathed. She kissed him quickly as relief flooded over before she spoke again, "Are you ok?"

Hiccup turned his face to look at her, his green eyes showed something halfway between confusion and shock. His breathing slowed and his eyes filled with love and relief. He wrapped his arms tightly around his wife.

"I saw the battle from twelve years ago," he said.

"What do you mean?" Astrid asked.

Hiccup let her go and brought his hand to his head. "My vision kept switching back and forth, now and the past. Then everything went dark."

"C'mon," Astrid said as she got him on his feet, "let's head back to the village."

As it just so happened, the day was the anniversary of the Vikings' victory over the evil Aries. It had become customary for the brawny people to hold a festival of celebration on this day. So, that night all of the Haddocks joined the rest of the village in the Tavern and the surrounding area. A large space was cleared out in the tavern for dances, while numerous tables filled the streets, each heavily laden with a wide variety of food.

It did not take long for the younger Haddocks to vanish in the massive crowd of people. Their parents let them go off and enjoy this special night. Astrid wore a beautiful blue dress that quite frankly she didn't feel very comfortable in. However, any discomfort was more than made up for in Hiccup's loving gaze that did not cease. It was almost impossible for him to take his eyes off her. Hiccup was looking pretty handsome himself. He wore a green short-sleeved tunic with a belt around his waist, a golden band sat on the crown of his head, and a fur cape wrapped around his neck and almost touched the ground.

He took his wife by the hand and eagerly led her into the tavern. The two watched several of the Vikings dance, including many of their friends, while they ate. Then, with a smirk on his face, Hiccup turned and stood in front of Astrid. He bowed and held out his hand.

"My lady, would you care to dance?"

"I would love to," Astrid replied, only the slightest hint of a blush on her face as she took his hand.

The two walked out on the dance floor, and though most of the audience had their eyes fixed on the young couple, as Hiccup took her hand in his, placing the other on her waist as she placed hers on his shoulder, the rest of the world disappeared. As they moved and spun, the lights and images of the tavern and the surrounding crowd turned into a blurred colorful collage in the background.

As the music changed tune, the couple stopped their mesmerizing dance. As others moved out on the dance floor, the young husband and wife stopped and stared into each other's eyes. As their eyes closed and their lips met in a slow and loving kiss, their hearts jumped for joy. Hiccup began to feel slightly lightheaded while his stomach felt like it was doing summersaults. When they separated and turned to rejoin the crowd, the couple and a few others gave a hearty laugh when they saw the children seated on the edge of a table facing the dancers, their hands covering their eyes. Saber even had his hand covering Hic's eyes.

While Hiccup never had another episode like he did on the mountain again, his nights were now haunted with terrible nightmares of the events that occurred all those years ago. Astrid was becoming increasingly worried about him, but the future Chief refused to let it affect him. He would just shoulder it and move on.

One morning, Hiccup awoke from his nightmare just as the sun was starting to peak over the horizon. Astrid rose up on one arm, turning

to look at her husband. "Another nightmare?" Her question was more of a statement than a query.

"Yeah," Hiccup said.

Astrid rested her hand on his bare shoulder. Then she sat up, taking the other arm and embracing him from behind. "You don't have to keep this up Hiccup. You can take a break. You can rest, no one would blame you."

"Astrid, I can't. If I do, it'll just keep eating at me." He reached up and took her hands in his, then turned to gaze into her eyes.

"Thank you for your concern," he leaned forward and quickly pressed his lips to hers. When they separated, he smiled at her. "I love you," he said before turning away and reaching for his prosthetic leg.

"What are you doing?" Astrid asked.

"I think I'm going to go for an extra long flight this morning," the Viking answered.

When Hiccup and Toothless returned from their morning flight, it was straight to Chieftain Training for the auburn haired Viking. He was met by his father and Gobber, and together they moseyed on through the village. Their first stop of the day was at the large pasture where the villagers kept most of their sheep.

"Now Hiccup," Stoic began with a voice that absolutely oozed with pride, though whether it was because of his son someday taking the title of Chief or because he was teaching Hiccup couldn't quite tell, "one of the most important resources we have are our sheep. Why is that?"

Hiccup couldn't help but to roll his eyes. Everyone on the island knew the answer to that. "Because they provide food and their wool keeps us from freezing to death," Hiccup relented, though he smirked at the shocked looks on the faces of the sheep.

"Exactly!" Stoic shouted, "Now, why do we keep them all together in one location?"

"So that it's easier to keep them safe," Hiccup responded.

"Right again, Hiccup!" Stoic said that as if it were an actually tough question. He then hopped over the fence and turned toward his son and Gobber, proceeding to give a speech about the Chief's duties to protect and nurture the sheep. Hiccup was only half listening, as he had heard all of this before, but his attention was entirely lost when he saw something amongst the sheep that sent a chill down his spine.

Amongst all the white wool, Hiccup spied the top of a blonde head that bobbed and weaved between the sheep. It was soon joined by another blonde head, which strapped a small saddle to one of the sheep. The loud "baaa" it let loose didn't bother Stoic in the slightest, but it got Gobber's attention. He immediately began scanning for the distressed sheep.

Hiccup's fears were confirmed when Saber soon appeared astride the

saddle. He was belted to it, and then handed a stick with a piece of string tied to one end of it. Hanging on the other end of the string was a vegetable, which Saber began dangling in front of the animal's face. The sheep baaaed again and then proceeded to chase the vegetable, which bounced up and down but never got any closer to its mouth.

By now Gobber saw what was happening, and he tried to warn the pranksters' grandfather. "Stoic, you should-

"Not now Gobber, I'm still teaching." Stoic cut him off, completely missing his son's gaping jaw.

The thing about sheep is that wherever one goes, the herd follows. This one sheep with Saber on it was chasing the piece of vegetable, so the rest followed- right towards the three adults. Stoic continued to ignore the frantic attempts of his son and his friend to warn him, so the two just ran out of the way as the herd ran into the Chief.

There was a loud crash as the sheep bowled over both the Viking and the wooden fence in front of them. When the last of the herd passed on, Hiccup and Gobber ran to the groaning and dazed Viking Chief lying on the ground. When they helped him up, they heard a whoop coming from Asta as she and Finn ran across the pasture after the sheep. Asta didn't look at them, but Finn had guilt and regret written all over his face.

"Sorry Dad! Sorry Grandpa!" The young Viking shouted.

"Finn, Asta!" Hiccup barked in a stern voice, "You get Saber off that sheep now!"

"Yes, Daddy," Asta said in a sing-song voice, unable to hide the giddiness from her plan's success.

In the shadows of the cliffs north of the village, a small sail boat came close enough the rocky face for its two occupants to latch on and begin climbing, leaving the small vessel tied to a rock jutting from the water's surface. The climbers were garbed in black tunics, with black, padded armor covering most of their bodies. The shorter one had a long black ponytail snaking out from under black cloth that wrapped her head and concealed all of her face but her brown eyes. The other climber wore a hood that completely obscured his head.

The climbers reached the topped and headed into the forest. They moved with absolute silence, not a single twig or leaf being disturbed by the silent figures. Yet, the creatures of the forest seemed to be alert to their presence, as the forest became dead silent and still while they passed. Finally, the two emerged from the trees on a stony hill overlooking the village.

"Now," the man's voice was cold and sent chills through his compatriot. "All you have to do is get in, kill him, and get out. There's no problem to it. Should you get caught, well I'll take care of that."

"What will you be doing master?" A young woman's voice spoke through the mask.

"That is for me to know and for you to find out later," her master replied. "Now, go."

It took the better part of the day to round up all the sheep. The sheep with the young Haddock attached to it was particularly difficult. After it finally managed to eat the vegetable, it went berserk at the realization of the human on its back. It ran to and fro, terrorized by Saber's mere presence. Needless to say, when Saber was finally secured, Hiccup was not a happy Viking.

"I can't believe you two!" The young father scolded his eldest children, "That was dangerous, somebody could have been seriously hurt. Especially your grandfather or your brother! What in Odin's name were you thinking?"

Even Asta hung her head at her father's words. Finn opened and closed his mouth a few times, but to no avail. No words came out. All that came to mind were simply excuses, no matter how true they were. Even if it was originally Asta's idea, it was Finn who included the saddle for Saber's safety.

Seeing that his children had nothing to say, Hiccup spoke again, but this time in a somewhat softer tone. "Go to the house and stay there until I get back. If your mom says anything, tell her I've already talked to you. Stay there and stay out of trouble."

The three younger Haddocks left and Hiccup returned to Stoic and Gobber to finish up for the day. They moved to the forge to inspect a pile of shields. Hiccup was in the act of holding one up, acting as if he were actually using it, when he suddenly spun to test his fluidity with the shield. While spinning, he felt and they all heard something thud against the shield. Hiccup looked to see a razor-sharp, star shaped piece of metal embedded in the shield.

He looked up from the shield to see a woman dressed completely in black sprinting towards him. She leapt into the air, her foot extended. Hiccup raised the shield, and the attacker simply switched from a kick to using the shield to propel herself over the heads of all three Vikings.

Once on the ground, she quickly darted forward. Her foot slammed against Gobber's peg-leg, causing him to fall to his knees. She turned and leapt with both feet into Stoic's brawny chest. She pushed off him, throwing him to the ground while landing back on her feet. But now there was a swarm of Vikings heading their way.

In a flash, the would be assassin climbed up a pile of firewood and leapt onto the roof of the house next to it. However, as she tried to escape along the rooftops, Hiccup decided to use a move that Astrid taught him. She called it the "Frisbee." Hiccup took off the shield and held the edge with his hands, twisting his body backwards as he did so. Suddenly he swung forward, angling the shield into the air. When he let go the circle of wood with its steel lining spun forward, at first looking like it was going to completely miss their attacker. Then, it angled further and changed directory, flying extremely fast and straight at the mysterious woman.

She leapt into the air towards another roof, but too late. The shield hit her square in the back in midair, knocking her to the ground. Quickly, the hoard of other Vikings gathered around her. When they

brought her before Hiccup, Stoic, and Gobber, she struggled vainly against the massive arms that restrained her. When at last she seemed to have given up, Hiccup slowly approached her.

"Who are you? Why are you here?" he asked.

When she didn't answer, Hiccup reached up and undid the cloth wrapped around her head. The cloth fell to the ground to reveal a beautiful young woman. She had very tan skin, definitely not from anywhere nearby, as the sun was never out enough for anyone to get that tan. She had deep, brown eyes, and her hair was as black as Toothless' scales. The two stared at each other for a few seconds before Hiccup opened his mouth to speak again. However, it wasn't his voice that got everyone's attention.

"Hiccup!" Astrid's voice rang loud and clear, as did the panic it contained. Panic was not something Astrid did, and so it struck alarm and fear into the hearts of the other Vikings as well as her husband.

"Astrid!" Hiccup shouted back as he ran to her. She ran into his arms, her tearstained face burying itself into his shoulder. When she looked back into his face, Hiccup could see the fear in her eyes, and he wondered what could possibly strike such fear into this strong and brave woman's heart. "What is it?"

"The children," Astrid whispered, her words depositing the fear she felt deep into his own heart, "Hiccup, the children are gone."

Astrid had already heard of her children's latest exploit by the time they got to the house. She sent them in immediately, informing them that they would have a talk when their father got home. Then, she went around to the back of the house to practice her axe throwing.

She had only been at it for a few minutes when, as she was returning to the throwing point from retrieving the weapon, she noticed a hooded figure dressed in black a few yards away, watching her. She stopped and stared at the figure, her hands tightening around the handle of her battle axe as a great feeling of uneasiness flooded her mind, causing her heart to race. Then, the figure abruptly turned and began to walk- straight toward the house.

"Hey, you! Stop!" Astrid yelled as she ran to intercept him. He completely ignored her, only quickened his already brisk pace. Astrid broke out into an all-out sprint, raising her axe above her head as she charged.

"I said stop!" She shouted angrily before bringing the axe down towards the man. He moved in the blink of an eye. The curved and sharpened edge of the Viking weapon embedded into the ground, having missed its target completely. The hooded figure was now by her side, and before she could react, his balled fist smashed against her stomach with a surprisingly strong force. Astrid felt all the wind get knocked out of her and she reeled backwards, falling onto the grass. Groaning and furious, her blood hot and the familiar adrenaline of combat flowing into her veins; the Viking began to get up. However, all of controlled anger was wiped clean when, after she had risen to her knees, another blow came against the side of her

head, and everything went black.

When she awoke, the first thing Astrid noticed was that her head was pounding. Then the memory of what happened returned, and the young woman shot to her feet, headache completely forgotten. She ran to the front of the house, only to find the door barely hanging on its hinges. The house itself was a mess, like a tornado had run through it. When she went around to where the dragons were, she found both of them trapped to the ground by powerful roots that definitely weren't there before. She quickly slashed the roots and rushed to find Hiccup.

The village quickly buzzed with activity as the Vikings began to search for the kidnapped Haddocks. Dragons and their riders took to the skies, flying low over the trees as they scanned for the missing children. The assassin was taken under guard to the tavern, allowing Hiccup and Astrid to join the search.

Yet, despite all this, they somehow missed the hooded figure entering his small boat, followed by a floating cage in which the young Haddocks were trapped. The children screamed and yelled, seeing the dragons in the sky, but no one heard them.

"You'll never get away with this," Finn said angrily to their mysterious kidnapper, "Our mom's a great warrior and our dad's a dragon master. They're gonna catch you."

The mysterious man had been concentrating on preparing to leave, but in a flash he was mere inches from the cave. His deep, cold voice penetrated the children with fear, "Trust me, you little headacheâ€¢ I'm counting on it."

** I'm baaaack! For a while I didn't think I was going to, but now that I have time, I'm going to finish this thing. I'm also going to be working on another fanfic for the anime Sword Art Online at the same time. After that, I think I'm going to move on to writing my own works of fiction. Please review. And thank you to those who kept emailing for me to keep updating, sorry it took so long, but I was on a mission for about 10 months. I'll update soon!**

Dark Guymelef

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4

A New Adventure

A flash of lightning temporarily blinded all in the large meeting house that stood on the top of the hill at the center Berk. This basically consisted of Hiccup and Astrid, their friends, a few Viking guards, and Hiccup's attempted murderer. She was tied to a chair in the center of the room, her head hanging as some of her hair obscured her face from view.

The crash of thunder rocked the wooden frame of the building, and was soon replaced again with the pounding of rain on the roof. Hiccup paced back and forth, obviously agitated. Deep, dark circles under his eyes proved his lack of sleep, same as with his wife. Neither

slept much the last three days. Three days, and still they were no closer to finding the children than when they were first taken. If only this woman would actually say something! She hadn't spoken a word since her capture.

The young, thin Viking fumed as he dwelt on the problem. He was at the breaking point. It was all he could do not to just grab an axe and lop her head off. Finally, after several long moments of silence, Hiccup approached their prisoner and spoke.

"Where are my children?" He asked for the hundredth time. Hiccup's voice was low and absolutely dripping with contempt. "Where did your partner take them? Huh? ANSWER ME!" He shouted, startling all in the room. "They're just children!" Hiccup was not bothering to be quiet or controlled now, "They're just innocent children!" He pulled back a fist as if to strike her, but the table behind her got it instead. Hiccup took a few deep breaths and spoke in a low, calm voice again, "I just want my children back. That's all. Why would you do this?"

To his surprise, the woman made some sort of sound, like a small squeak. Then, she began to speak. "In a land long lost, hidden by the hands of gods, there will the fate of the universe be decided. Across a land once barren from battle a hero will travel. There, were ancient meets knew, where heaven and hell live in unison, where winged guardians watch the gates. Through those doors only the pure in heart can enter. There you will find what you seek, young traveler. There in the hall of the Dragon King, Bahamut." She looked up, and everyone was shocked to see tears streaming down her face. When she spoke again, her voice sounded as if it was about to crack. "I'm sorry, that story is the only clue I have to where he took them. I swear, I didn't know that was his plan. I was only supposed to kill you, and he was going to ensure my safety if captured. I never would have agreed to this if I had knownâ€|"

Her head dropped again, and her quiet sobs was the only sound besides the rain. The Vikings stood in stunned silence. Finally, Astrid spoke, "What place does that story talk about?"

The young women looked up again, "It's a legend from my village. It talks about a hero going to the shrine of Bahamut, the Dragon King."

"Where is this shrine?" Hiccup asked.

The woman hesitated before answering, "The Lost Continent."

"What!" Snotlout was the first to respond to her answer, "We don't have to go back there, do we?"

"That place is bad luck," Ruffnut said, "We barely survived our last trip there."

Both were silenced by the look on Astrid's face; that and her balled fists. Hiccup leaned against a pillar, thinking. More to himself than anyone else he stated, "We'll need someone who knows the way to Maelstrom Island."

As if on cue, the doors to the meeting house flung open. There, standing just inside the doorway, was a massive Viking with a peg

leg, two missing fingers on one hand, a long, scraggly, unkempt beard, and eye patch on his right eye. "Did someone say 'Maelstrom Island'?" Ivan the Plunderer roared.

"But I don't want to go!" Snotlout yelled at the clear, starry night sky as Ivan's new ship, _Leviathan_, sailed off into the night.

"Oh shut up," Tuffnut said, "You whining is not going to make Astrid change her mind. Besides, you're giving me a headache."

"Oh yeah?" Ruffnut came to her husband's defense, "Well you give me a headache!"

"Uh, guys?" Fishlegs tried to cut in, but was ignored as the twins entered an all-out squabble. Snotlout and Fishlegs could do nothing but stare hopelessly at them.

Meanwhile, Hiccup and Astrid stood side by side, looking out to the vast waters all around them. The couple stood in silence for a while, feeling the familiar spray of the water and the slight breeze that gently brushed against them. This awoke excited feelings of adventure in them, but that was still overshadowed by the worry for their children.

Hiccup sighed and folded his arms on the railing, "Did you ever think we would be going back there?"

Astrid thought for a moment, "Honestly, no. I didn't think we would ever go back. But, it will be nice to see all of our friends again."

Silence rose up again for a few moments before Hiccup, staring at the water below, spoke again. "I'm sorry, Astrid."

The Viking woman blinked, confused. "Sorry for what?"

He sighed again, "If you had married someone else, if you hadn't married me, you wouldn't be going through this."

His words revealed the turmoil in his heart and the thoughts that it was bringing to his mind. Astrid placed her hands on her hips and glared at him. "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock! You have no idea how mad that makes me!"

"Ow!" Hiccup yelped as her fist connected with his arm.

"That is for thinking those things," Astrid informed him before grabbing him by the shirt and pulling him towards her, their lips crashing together. After a few moments she released him, and stared at him lovingly, "And that is for giving me the opportunity to be with you."

The feelings of unwarranted guilt still had not completely left, however, as Hiccup looked down at those last words, his shoulders sagging. Determined not to let him feel this way, Astrid took hold of his hand and with her other hand lifted his chin so his eyes were level with hers.

"Hiccup, I love you. I wouldn't dream of being with anyone other than you. Even if I knew all the hardship we would endure, I'd still have

chosen to marry you, because I would have known that I wouldn't be facing all that hardship alone. Yes, this is hard. And yes, I'm scared to death for the children, but I still have you with me, and I know that together, we will get them back."

That seemed to work, because the saddened look in Hiccup's eyes vanished, replaced by love. He threw his arms around her and pulled her into a tight embrace. "I love you Astrid," he whispered.

She smiled, "I love you too Hiccup."

The young Haddocks found themselves inside a prison cell aboard a large ship. Their cell was at the end of a long hallway, across from a large stack of boxes and barrels that contained, judging by the smell, food of some sort. The noise of a myriad of voices drifted down the hall to them from a dining area at the other end of the hall. Shortly before the door to that room were the stairs leading into the hallway from the deck.

Their guard had gone to get their lunch, which gave the children time to set up the trap they'd devised over the last two days since they were imprisoned there. Their plan involved two long ropes, the bucket that normally served as their toilet filled with numerous rocks, and two wooden spoons in the hands of Saber.

The ship creaked and swayed as the clanking of steel boots on the wooden floor signaled the return of the guard. Finn turned to his sister, "You ready?"

Asta leaned against the wall of the cell, her hands behind her back to hold the rope attached to the bucket in place. She grinned and nodded to her elder brother. Right after that, her face took on a façade of fear as the armored guard walked to the door of the cell, a single plate of food in his hands.

"Get back you snot-nosed little brats!" He barked while his keys rattled as he unlocked the cell. In mock fear, Finn jumped a good two feet backwards from him. The guard took one step into the room, and Asta let go of the rope.

The bucket swung down from the ceiling, smacking against the guard's steel helmet. He staggered backwards, which allowed the bucket to continue its swing back into the air. He recovered and with a glare began to advance again when the bucket came back down, connecting with the back of his head. That sent him sprawling on the floor. Immediately the children went into action. Saber hopped on the man's back, drumming on his helmet with the two wooden spoons. Finn and Asta grabbed the other rope and quickly began to hog tie him while Hic sat back and laughed at the scene.

The guard groaned as Finn walked around to his face, a dirty rag in his hands. The guard was obviously disoriented by the drumming Saber was doing. He looked confused as Finn knelt down and stuffed the rag into his mouth.

"Now, no screaming or anything, okay?" Finn asked sarcastically with a smirk.

Now freed, the four children had to ensure that everyone was distracted while they escaped. Quietly and cautiously, they crept to

the doorway into the dining area. It was packed with men, both the stinky, grimy, barbaric crew and the armored and disciplined guards of their captor. The children got on their hands and knees and silently crawled inside. Finn popped his head in first and looked around. Spotting some barrels next to the wall on the right side of the room, he motioned for his siblings to follow them.

The four of them hid between the barrels and the wall, peering over it at the mass of men responsible for the tumultuous noise that they heard from their cell. They crouched back down behind the barrels and exchanged worried looks.

"What are going to do? There's so many of them." Asta said.

Finn bowed his head as he thought, just as a tomato that had fallen from the nearest table rolled right up to Hic. Giggling in delight, the baby Viking picked up the large, round vegetable and shook it, then lobbed it into the air. His siblings' faces paled as they watched the tomato helplessly. The vegetable soared over the first row of tables and then began its descent.

SPLAT!

It exploded on the face of one of the guards. His face instantly turned to one of fury and his friends looked about indignantly for the culprit. The crew members who saw this burst into fits of outrageous laughter.

"Alright!" Hic's victim shouted as he stood and pointed to the crew members in the room. "Which one of you smelly, dirty, scallop-brained buffoons threw that?!"

"'Ey! Who you callin' a buffoon you git?" One of the crew members responded.

His answer was goblet of juice in the face. This was the last straw. Within an instant, food and drink were flying back and forth across the room amid strings of curses and insults. Meanwhile, behind the barrels, Finn, Asta, and Saber beamed at the youngest sibling.

"You go Hic!" Asta quietly exclaimed.

The baby squealed in delight as Finn again led the way back to the door on his hands and knees. They could hardly contain their excitement. However, all the noise in the room was instantly silenced when they reached the door and encountered a pair of black leather boots. Finn slowly looked up, his previous excitement consumed by fear.

Their captor, the hooded man who kidnapped them and brought them here, stood in the doorway, his hood angled so that Finn knew he was looking down at him, though the young Viking still couldn't see the face under the hood. Like a flash, the hooded man reached down and roughly grabbed Finn by the arm and yanked him to his feet. His siblings also stood, Asta cradling Hic in her arms.

"Tell me, Viking," his voice was cold and steeped in venom, "How were you planning get home after you escaped?" He then turned to the rest of the room, "Quit your stupid squabble. Where is the one responsible for them?" He spat the last word.

"H-he was down at the cell m-my Lord," one guard answered nervously.

"Grab them and follow me," the hooded man commanded as he shoved Finn towards them. A man grabbed hold of each Haddock child, which caused Hic to begin to wail. "Shut it! You little uncivilized barbarian!" The man snapped, his hood inches from the baby, who's cry was reduced to a whimper.

He led the way to the cell, where the guard lay on his side, unable to move or make a sound. His eyes widened in fear and he began to rock back in forth, trying vainly to speak through the cloth when he saw his master. Without a word, the evil hooded figure drew a long, steel sword from his belt, and stabbed it into the man's heart. The guard gave one last, muffled scream, then his rolled to the back of his head and his eyelids nearly closed. His murderer used the cloth in his mouth to clean the blood off of the blade before returning it to its scabbard.

"Come," the cold voice spoke to those present, "We've arrived."

By the time they entered the thick fog that in which the island was hidden, Hiccup was suffering from major cabin fever. Desperate, he climbed onto his Night Fury friend, and the two took off into the air, quickly disappearing from view of the ship. The wind, somewhat warmer than around Berk, rushed past him, pressing his clothes to his front and whipping his hair behind him.

The Viking let out a whoop as he and his friend, after receiving some substantial height, turned and dived back to the water. They dived in for a second, and then reemerged only dive in and out again. Then, with the tip of his inside wing barely skimming the water, Toothless made a sharp turn, flying low over the water in the direction they had just come. Hiccup pulled Toothless upwards, and they soared back into the air.

"Hiccup!"

Hiccup looked up to see Astrid astride her dragon, Prince. He smiled at her, his feelings of freedom unleashing some sort of giddiness on his mind.

"Hey Beautiful, what's up?" He asked as he and Toothless flew up to their side, flipped over so that Hiccup's head was even with hers, at which point he gave her a quick kiss, then flipped back over so they were right side up on the other side of the Viking woman and the Deadly Nadder.

Astrid smiled and laughed. "What's up with you? You seem unusually happy."

"I'm just glad to be in the air again, that's all." Hiccup answered before a rather cocky and knowing look graced his face. "That and I'm happy to look upon the fairest maiden in the entire world."

Astrid's smile grew and a light blush even graced her cheeks, but she had come with a reason. "We can't see you from the ship; I don't want you to get lost."

Hiccup's smile didn't waiver in the slightest, "Alright, I'll just fly around the ship then."

Husband and wife took off on their winged steeds to rejoin the ship. After a few moments, the dark shape of a hull and masts could be seen through the thick fog. The riders and their dragons swooped down towards the shadowy hulk, but the instant they came close enough to see the vessel in detail, they knew something was off.

The ship was completely void of life. Its wood was old and gray, covered in moss with cracks and holes everywhere. Seaweed hung from the masts, draping over the three open masts, which were also filled with holes and tears, the bottom part looking like it had been ripped off. The hull had a few large holes in it, some almost submerged in the water. It was a wonder the ship was floating at all, let alone moving.

"Something's not right," Hiccup said to the other three while they watched the ship. Suddenly he took Toothless into a dive, followed closely by Astrid.

He pulled up so they were flying alongside the rotten side of the large vessel. Hiccup flew towards the bow, stopping right alongside the name of the ship. Astrid soon pulled up alongside him, her face confused as they read the name.

"Harbinger," Hiccup read out loud. He then turned to the blonde next to him. "This isn't the Leviathan. We're being followed!"

At that point, a glowing green arrow flew right in between them, vanishing into the fog. Both turned around and glimpsed a shimmering green form disappear in one of the holes in the ship's hull. The two Vikings pulled up, taking off to find their friends. The wind blew past them as they flew at full speed, soon spotting Ivan's larger vessel. They banked and flew down to land on the deck of the ship.

"Oi Hiccup, Astrid," the massive Viking captain called, "where in the blazes have ye been?"

"Ivan!" Hiccup shouted as he and Astrid dismounted and ran to join him. "Ivan, we've got trouble!"

"Trouble? What do yer mean, trouble?"

By now their friends and most of the other crew were listening intently as well. "There's another ship behind us. We're being followed!" Hiccup said.

"Land ho!" the pirate in the eagle's nest called down to them. Everyone turned as the fog suddenly fell away, revealing an island surrounded by a thick ring of fog as if it was in the eye of a hurricane.

"There it be." Ivan said.

"Maelstrom Island." Snotlout added.

The Leviathan sailed out further away from the wall of fog, its crew scrambling to prepare for battle while the Vikings from Berk

mounted their dragons. Ivan stood next to them, a spyglass in his hands as he searched the fog.

Suddenly, the ghostly vessel burst from the wall of cloud. It appeared as lifeless as before except for its increased speed, and the fact that it was already turning to follow them. Then, as Ivan peered through the spyglass, he saw something on the deck come to the bow. Slowly, he lowered the tool, his one eye wide.

"What is it?" Astrid asked.

Ivan handed the spyglass to Hiccup, who then looked through it to see what Ivan saw. His jaw dropped when he saw it. "I don't believe it," the Viking said.

With its bony hand holding to the rotten wood railing of the ship's deck, a shimmering, green figure glared back at them. Its clothes were nothing but tattered rags revealing its fleshless body. It wore a rag wrapped around the top of its skull, from under which a few strands of long, stringy, greasy hair fell. In its other hand it held a glowing green, curved sword. However, it had no legs, and just floated above the deck.

"It's a ghost," Astrid whispered after she looked through the spyglass.

"Aye, that it is," Ivan stated with hard defiance in his voice now that he had recovered. "Ready yer weapons lads!" He shouted to his crew. "Let 'em taste da cold of yer steel."

Mwa hahahaha! Cliffhanger! I'll have the next chapter up in a few days. Please remember to review! I enjoy hearing what you guys think. C'ya later!

Dark Guymelef

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5

The Undead

"Ok people," Astrid's tone was authoritative and demanded obedience. "We'll take them from the air. Let's see if we can't sink that ship before it gets here!"

Hiccup and Toothless were the first to take off into the air. The tropical breeze blew back his bangs, making his brown hair to wave sporadically into the air. His Viking cohorts followed closely, but the Night Fury's speed far outmatched their own. Hiccup's heart began to pound and his Viking blood seemed to pulse with the thrill of battle as he and Toothless flew directly over the phantasmal vessel. He could now see several shimmering green dots moving to and fro over the deck of the ship.

"Alright Toothless," Hiccup encouraged his friend, "let's show them what we're made of."

The dragon looked back and grinned in agreement with his rider ally.

At only slight pressure from Hiccup, the dragon turned, folding his wings in around his body, and dived. The shriek of the dive-bomber filled the unclouded air. As they came nearer to their target, droves of glowing, deadly shafts rose to meet them. Not a single one hit the pair.

Toothless let loose one small, condensed ball of blue flame. With lightning speed the fireball collided with the ghostly ship's deck. It exploded with tremendous force, its flame burning bright red and orange as its condensed power unraveled. Flaming chunks of wood twisted and spun into the air, the water below churning as debris rained down upon it. Many of their phantom foes were knocked back by the force of the explosion, while those nearest to it either disintegrated or caught fire. Yet, though flaming, the ghosts completely ignored the tongues of fire.

The mighty black dragon extended his wings, abruptly ending their descent. They flew in between the masts, their speed so quick that the ghosts couldn't hit them with their arrows even at such a close range. Once over the ship, the pair flew back up into the air, preparing for their next pass.

Astrid and Prince were the next ones to attack. Two balls of flame smashed against the deck, not with the same force as Toothless' attack, but they still did significant damage. With a whip of the Deadly Nadder's tail, a dozen spikes pelted the deck. To the Vikings' surprise, some of them caught the ends of the ghost's rags, pinning them to the decaying wood. Snotlout came after her, Firedrake spewing a mighty tongue of flame. The fire burned bright across the deck. Ruffnut and Tuffnut flew in, covering the top of the deck with green gas. The other head of their Hideous Zippleback threw out a spark, causing the highly flammable gas to erupt into a cloud of flame. Yet, as Fishlegs flew in launching a series of accurate, though less explosive, fireballs; dozens more of the ghostly green figures were emerging from the hold.

Soaring in through the numerous pillars of black smoke that now filled the sky, Hiccup and Toothless made their second pass. There was a whistle, a speeding ball of fire, an explosion, and a black streak as the two flew low over the deck, reducing the base of the forward mast to splinters. The wood creaked and popped as it fell sideways into the sea. Yet the enemy ship seemed to stream on even faster.

The Vikings and their draconic allies pounded the vessel relentlessly. Fire burned hot all across the decrepit ship. Numerous ghosts were consumed to nothing, but still more climbed from the darkness below the deck. Their glowing missiles flew in every direction amidst the swirling smoke and the winged reptiles.

Hiccup stopped to watch incredulously as the phantom ship continued its steady course after the _Leviathan_, leaving a large trail of smoke in the air. They'd done everything they could think of, from blowing the masts to destroying the rudder, and still it trudged on. As Hiccup thought of how they could stop it, Astrid flew alongside him.

"Astrid, your leg!" Hiccup exclaimed, his eyes widening in worry. Astrid looked down to see blood slowly drip from a small scratch on her leg where she was grazed by an arrow.

"Honestly?" She was astounded, "You're worried about that?"

A sudden thought struck Hiccup, and he looked over to their friends mustering all their strength in futility to stop the enemy vessel. He looked back to his wife, resolute determination in his eyes. His face was hard and his tone left no room for questioning when he spoke.

"Astrid, I need you to go activate the gate, now."

Naturally, the woman thought he was doing this in an effort to protect her, which was partially true. Due to this assumption, that particular notion did not go over well. Astrid's sapphire eyes narrowed dangerously as she leered at her husband.

"Hiccup, you know darn well that I-"

She never finished her sentence, for Hiccup suddenly leaned over and gently pressed his lips to hers. When he ended the kiss, he kept his face close to hers, staring into her eyes. His tone was gentle and pleading.

"Please Astrid. You're the only one who's done it before and we don't have time."

Astrid's facial features softened, "Okay, but if anything happens to you Hiccup, I swear I will kill you."

Hiccup smiled at her as she flew towards the island. He and Toothless returned to their four friends flying in and out amid great plumes of smoke and glowing green darts. They stopped just short of the Harbinger, giving Hiccup a chance to carefully analyze the situation as he struggled to find a solution. Then, he was hit with a stroke of brilliance.

The pair flew in to the fray, Toothless unleashing fire bombs on the burning deck below as Hiccup scanned the sky for the large, green, two headed dragon. He soon found it and its obnoxious masters flying alongside the other two as they moved in formation. Hiccup quickly guided his draconic pal over to them.

"Ruff, Tuff!" Hiccup called over the beating of wings and the roar of the fire, "I need you two to fill the hold with gas, and then light it. Snotlout, Fishlegs, we'll back off to be clear of the explosion."

"Right!" Snotlout said as he and Fishlegs banked to move away from the ghost ship.

"Great, we get to go blow something up," Tuffnut said to his twin, wide grins spanning both of their faces.

The Hideous Zippleback flew back and forth, filling every hole it could find with its green substance. Eventually, the green gas overflowed out of every hole in the ship. At that point, the twins and their dragon came alongside the vessel and sparked one of the streams of green cloud floating out of a hole in the side.

There was an ear-splitting, wood-shattering roar as the entire green

cloud contained in the bowels of the ship ignited. Fire and smoke ripped through the rotten wood, blasting high into the air. A large wave flowed from the ship as the force of the explosion rippled through both air and water. The twins and their dragon were knocked and spun from the force, and barely avoided collision with the sea. All of the Vikings and their dragons had to move out of the way to avoid chunks of debris that rained down from the massive, fiery cloud.

They laughed and cheered, congratulating on another as they flew back Ivan's ship, which was only a short ways away. It was then that Hiccup noticed Ivan waving to them, then pointing back at the smoking ruin. Hiccup turned his head to see what Ivan was pointing at. What he saw made his jaw drop and his skin pale. It also stifled the victorious celebrations of his friends.

Thoroughly flaming, with a single massive plume of smoke that spanned the length of the entire ship, the very bottom part of the enemy vessel sailed from the mass of smoke and fire. There was only just a small bit of wood above the water all around, and Hiccup was sure there were holes for water to enter, yet the small remains of the vessel were moving even faster, as if it was being propelled by a supernatural force. What was more, the large hunk of driftwood no longer deserving of the word ship carried within it a green glow. It was absolutely packed to capacity with phantoms.

Within a few minutes the ghosts were alongside the Viking ship. Ivan assembled his men on the ship's deck on the side opposite the one the ghosts were now climbing. The impressively burly man stood at the head of his crew, sword in one hand and hammer in the other. As the greenish ghouls climbed over the railing onto the deck, they were met by numerous growls, bared teeth, and other rude gestures from the muscled hulks.

"Yaaaarrgh!" Ivan gave his battle cry, charging forward at the head of the crew. In an instant the deck became a massive melee between pirate and phantom.

Hiccup and the others circled the two vessels. It was too dangerous for them to attack from above now; the chance of hitting other Vikings was too high. At Hiccup's signal, they all flew down to the _Leviathan._ Toothless grabbed two of their undead foes in his claws, throwing them against the nearest mast. The dragon landed on the deck, his rider dismounting and drawing his sword simultaneously. The Night Fury growled before taking off into the fray.

Hiccup was engaged almost instantly as the others landed on the deck as well. With sword and shield in hand, the Viking easily blocked and parried every blow made by his opponent's small axe. Then the axe became stuck in the wood of Hiccup's shield. As the phantom tried vainly to retrieve the weapon, Hiccup brought his sharpened, well cared for blade down on the crevice of the ghost's elbow. Its arm broke off, but before it could do anything else, the point of Hiccup's sword pierced the skull. His enemy shook for a little bit before a white light grew within it until it was consumed.

Unaware of her friends' plight, Astrid and Prince zipped in between trees as they raced toward the mountain that dominated the island. The wind whipped the Viking's blond hair behind her, entirely revealing the look of strong, resolute determination on her face.

Soon the entrance to the long, winding staircase that cut into the mountain was before her.

She hugged the back of her dragon as tight as she dared. Prince quickly ascended the staircase, his long and powerful legs allowed them to leap up several stairs in a single bound. Where the walls became high enough, he was even able to use his wings to propel them even farther.

Yet again, Astrid found herself cursing the length of these infernal stairs. As she remembered her last trip here, one single, horrifying thought came to the woman's mind. She clearly remembered hearing a crash last time that implied a cave in. What if they couldn't get through? Worse yet, what if the gate chamber had collapsed?

There was a sudden burst of light, and Astrid had just enough time to look around and see the answer to her questions. Indeed, the tunnel had collapsed, but something had completely blown away the caved in rock. Whatever it was had enough power that it even blew a hole through the remaining rock between the staircase to the outside. The light she saw poured in through the hole.

Within a few more minutes, Astrid found herself inside the dusty gate chamber. The dirt and dust were so thick that it caused a light cloud throughout the room. She coughed after dismounting the Deadly Nadder, who squawked as if to announce their arrival. He held his head high in pride at his accomplishment.

Astrid approached the stone table in the room's center while memories of last time played over and over again in her mind like a broken record. She slipped her wedding ring and placed in the center of the stone slab. Light traveled from the center, snaking along predetermined courses to light up the runes along the table's edge. Astrid watched in wonder again, entranced by the light's blue glow. Then all the light dimmed until it was gone, leaving Astrid once again standing in the middle of the dusty, dark room.

She grabbed the ring and slid it back on her finger, running to jump on Prince's back. Dirt and small pieces of rock fell from the ceiling as the ground began to shake. Prince squawked in alarm. He immediately turned and began to practically glide down the stairs. Once Astrid saw the approaching hole in the wall, she carefully guided Prince through it. The two dove down the mountainside, much like Hiccup and Toothless did all of the time. Astrid could see the trees below shuddering from the shockwaves, and already the sea level was beginning to rise. The Deadly Nadder came out of its dive, flying low over the jungle to the Leviathan.

The Vikings were clearly better warriors than their opponents, but for every ghost they slew, another climbed onto the deck. Hiccup could tell that if this kept up, their foes would eventually overwhelm the exhausted Vikings. He vented his frustration on his closest enemy splitting in half from top to bottom.

As the young Viking turned to fight another of the shimmering figures, he didn't see one of the ghosts come up on his rear, preparing to strike him down. Hiccup instinctively ducked when a black shadow flew over his head. Aria, their prisoner from the Lost Continent and Hiccup's would-be killer, cut the phantom's skull to pieces with her finely forged short sword. She looked up to Hiccup's

astonished face and smiled.

The two stood back to back as the dueled furiously with the seemingly endless horde of undead. Meanwhile, all across the large vessel Viking's were receiving a short respite from the combat as the dragons tore through the fray. The ghosts didn't stand a chance against them. The large reptiles easily sent bones flying into the air.

Then, what felt like a large wave smacked against the vessel. Completely unprepared for it, nearly everyone fell to their knees. The ship began to rock side to side, and Hiccup noticed the water rising on their left. Hiccup looked in away at the massive wave, but as the ship tilted further and further sideways, he looked off to his right, and was far more impressed by what he saw there.

The island sat in the middle of a giant dip in the ocean. It seemed to be sinking, but Hiccup was pretty sure it only looked that way because that's what he was told it did. The young man's heart skipped a beat when he saw a small blue and yellow dot racing from the sinking island up to them.

Astrid struggled to get close to the ship as it gained speed, traveling to the bottom of the maelstrom, where the island was swiftly disappearing below the water. Finally, it became apparent that she would need to try to dive into the water at the same time that they sank. Guiding her dragon right above the center of the massive whirlpool, Prince folded his wings close around his body as they dropped straight to the churning water at the bottom. They were submerged just as the _Leviathan_ hit the frothy bottom, blowing away the bottom part of the bow.

"Hiccup!" The voice was very familiar, but Hiccup couldn't recall from where. In fact, at the moment, he couldn't remember anything. "Hiccup!" The voice was stronger now, and he felt his mind beginning to piece things back together. Then the gentle feel of soft lips against his sent waves of electrifying feelings coursing through his body, waking his brain with a start.

"What happened? Where are we?" The confused Viking asked as he looked at his wife next to him. She seemed to completely ignore what he said.

"Oh thank Odin, you're alive!" Astrid said with watery eyes as she threw her arms around her husband. A moment later Toothless joined them, licking the side of Hiccup's face.

"Yaaaaaarrrrgggg!" Snotlout's scream interrupted the happy reunion. The three turned to see him running back and forth across the warm sand, a rather large crab dangling from its firm hold on his buttocks. Ruffnut and Tuffnut chased their friend across the beach, trying to get him to stop running long enough for them to remove the crab. The Haddocks and their dragons chuckled at the comical scene.

"NOOOOOOOO!" Everyone turned their attention to Ivan the Plunderer. He was on his knees in the sand, screaming and shaking his fists to the heavens. A ways beyond him, in the shallow water of the shore, they could see the remnants of the _Leviathan_. It lay in shambles, pieces of wood scattered everywhere. Only the front mast with its

torn and battered sail still stood attached to a large chunk of the ship. The massive Viking was brought to tears at the sight of his beloved vessel. His men came forward to try to comfort him. The remains of the Harbinger were nowhere to be seen.

"Guys, look!" Fishlegs grabbed their attention as he pointed down the beach in the other direction.

Even from where they were gathered, the Vikings could see a massive city in the distance. Sunlight reflected off of a large, marble palace that sat on the highest point in the city. Coming from the city, they noticed a line of specks coming towards them.

The Vikings got to their feet, preparing to meet the coming procession. As it drew nearer, they could distinguish several well muscled, tan men marching towards them. They had on golden breastplates, helmets, and grieves. They wore open-toed sandals and marched with scimitars on their belts and spears in their hands. The lead soldier wore a blue cape and carried a round, steel shield instead of a spear. When they reached the group, he drew his sword and pointed it at them.

"Who are you and why are you here?" The troop leader demanded.

This irked Astrid, though she had to admit it was a better greeting than last time. Before she could open her mouth to retort, Aria, the assassin, spoke.

"I am Aria, from Aloceenia. These are the legendary Vikings of Berk who helped defeat the Magus twelve years ago. They seek an audience with the Principal."

The greeting party's attitude changed immediately with this information. The commander and his men knelt on one knee with their heads bowed. "Forgive us, we did not know. Your arrival is a great comfort in these troubled times. Please, let us escort you to presence of the Principal."

"Very well," Hiccup's voice carried a slight hint of confident authority he'd acquired while training to become chief, "lead on."

Sorry this chapter took so long, I got a little busy and had some trouble figuring out how much to include in it. I'll have the next chapter up soon. Please review!

Dark Guymelef

6. Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Cursed Land

The city was twice the size it was the last time the Vikings walked its streets. Before, they entered the city as if they were criminals. Now, they entered it as heroes. News of their arrival traveled fast, and before long the city guards had to hold off a cheering crowd. Yet, for all the joy that shone from the faces of the Lost Continent

natives, Hiccup observed images of intense hardship. Many of their faces were shallow and thin; their clothes often ragged and tattered. This brought the young man's thoughts back to what the captain said on the beach; something about dark times.

After hours of walking across the winding, dusty cobblestone streets of the city, they found themselves before the gates to a large courtyard. The two men guarding the outside of the gates stood stalk still as two more came from the inside and pulled the iron doors open.

The group proceeded into a large stone courtyard that had two large garden areas on which a colorful display of flowers rustled slightly as the cool ocean breeze blew by. In the center of the courtyard stood a fountain, its crystal clear water glistening in the sunlight.

The Vikings looked about in awe while their large draconic companions eagerly sniffed the flowers and dipped their noses in the water of the fountain. At the other end of the courtyard was the palace the group saw from the beach. Its towers rose high above them as they were led inside.

They walked into a large lobby constructed of marble and stone. A variety of plants stood in large pots scattered throughout the room. The guards stood stock still, their bodies as stiff as boards when the Vikings passed. They were brought up a large stone staircase to the second floor, then led through two wooden doors.

The Principal was a middle-aged man with a long, thin face. His light brown eyes lit up when the Vikings and their dragons entered the throne room. The captain came forward and knelt before the Principal, the visitors following suit.

"My Liege, these are the heroic Vikings of Berk and their dragons. They have come to seek an audience with you," the soldier told his ruler.

The Principal stood and raised his hands to the kneeling crowd of Vikings, "Welcome my friends! Please stand, you are our honored guests here. You are a sight for sore eyes. Tell me, what brings you here at this time?"

"Uh, thanks," Hiccup said, a wee bit flustered at this enthusiastic welcome. He coughed and stood straight. His whole demeanor changed as he addressed the Principal. "We came here after a man who kidnapped our children. Our only clue to his destination is the Shrine of Bahamut; this is where we are going."

"I seeâ€|" The Principal's face became sullen, his happy enthusiasm evaporating in an instant, "This means my worst fears are true."

"What do you mean?" Hiccup asked.

The Principal's sad, tired eyes met his. "You see my Viking friends; the Lost Continent is not the place it was when you left. When you left, word of your deeds brought hope and happiness to this land. Our peoples covered the face of it, building settlements and villages, finally settling in. Things began to look as they had before the

Magus left.

"Then, about five years ago, everything changed. The Nightmares somehow escaped their prison in the ruins and ran rampant across our lands. They terrorized and destroyed everything in their path. No army we could muster was enough to stop them. The survivors fled to the largest and safest of the remaining cities, leaving the continent to the brutish Nightmares. Our city grew to over three times what it was before. But as you probably saw, we struggle to have enough food to support ourselves."

"Aye, we noticed," Ivan the Plunderer spoke, "But what's dis gotta do wit' anythin'?"

"There is a legend that an ancient evil sealed inside Bahamut's shrine has some sort of ties with the Nightmares. Even now, their numbers near the shrine are greater than anything else. But, only one chosen by Bahamut himself can enter the shrine."

"Even so we must go there. If that's where my children will be I'll go by myself if I have to," Hiccup's determination and sudden presence of authority was slightly surprising to his friends.

"No need for that," the Principal assured, "perhaps you can help us find a way to stop the Nightmares. I will provide you with a guide and escort."

"I will be their guide," Hiccup's attempted murderer stepped forward and dropped to one knee, "My village is under the protection of the shrine. I know the quickest and safest way there."

"Rise, Aloceanian," the Principal told her. He looked at Hiccup, "Do you trust this woman enough to let her guide you?"

Hiccup looked at the woman in front of him. She met his gaze with a look that he knew all too well, though he had not seen it in fourteen years. He sighed and looked back at the Principal, "Yes, I trust her. She will be our guide."

"What? But Hiccup—" Snotlout's protest was silenced by Astrid's soul shriveling glare.

"Very well, we will grant you an escort then. But for now you must be tired! I'll provide you with a place to stay. I will also send a runner to inform you when dinner is ready. Arkaan!" A tall, bald man in a long, violet robe stepped forward near the throne. In a deep voice he asked what it was that the Principal wanted. "Show our guests to their room please. Oh, and see that the dragons are taken care of as well."

"As you wish my liege," the bald man bowed before walking out of the room, motioning for the Vikings to follow him.

That night, Hiccup and Astrid were preparing to go to bed. Arkaan, the head butler, made sure that the young Chief-in-training and his wife were given the best room available. The bed was large, with a soft, silky blanket. There were three tables against the walls of the room, including a nightstand on which stood a multi-tiered candlestick. This was the only source of light besides the moonlight and streetlamps whose light poured in through the window. Astrid was

already in bed by the time Hiccup sat down and began to work on removing the metal contraption that served as his leg.

"Hiccup?" Astrid's voice was gentle and somewhat hesitant.

"Yeah?" He responded without turning around.

"Why do you trust that girl?"

Hiccup stopped and opened his mouth only to close it again. He twisted around to look at Astrid. The light danced around her, giving her an alluring glow. Hiccup almost forgot to talk as he stared at her.

"I know she tried to kill me, but her sorrow about our kids seemed sincere. Andâ€¦ and when I look at her, I see the same thing in her eyes that stopped me from killing Toothless all those years ago."

Astrid smiled at him, making the Viking's heart melt. "I knew you had a good reason for it, though I was really confused when you said you trusted her."

"Thank you for trusting me, and for not calling me out in front of everyone." Hiccup finished with his leg and lay down. There was no way either of them were going to use that blanket with the heat.

Astrid scooted over into her husband's embrace. She gazed into his eyes, their lips slowly drawing closer and closer. Their breath mingled together as one when they stopped. Astrid's eyes flitted between his eyes and his mouth.

"I love you, Hiccup," the woman said before closing the minuscule space between them.

They left shortly after the sun's rays hit the city the next morning. The Nightmares were less active during the day, so they were to travel by sunlight. Their escort was a company of about thirty soldiers on horseback. Even though they were mounted, they could not gallop and the dragons couldn't fly so that they could minimize the likelihood of being spotted during their travels.

The troop hadn't gone very far before Ruffnut pretended to yawn, throwing wide an elbow right into the side of Tuffnut's head. They erupted into a flailing brawl. Pisces struggled to separate the quarreling twins while the guards watched, somewhat befuddled. Their friends merely shook their heads and continued walking. Snotlout sighed and hung his head, giving up on trying to mediate a truce, "Here we go again," he said, exasperated as they took the first steps on their journey.

The Vikings traveled slowly in the sweltering heat of the dry road. As the last rays of sunlight were about to vanish behind the horizon, the group pulled off the large road and set up camp. The soldiers took turns on guard duty, watching for the Nightmares.

In the morning they set out again, but now they were going to cross the Great Plains. This land was once lush and green, filled with many forests and wildlife. It was serene. Now, almost all the trees were

dead and blackened. What remained of the grass was sparse and yellow. It was almost as if the land itself had become physically sick.

Their journey was a long and dreary one. Their dead scenery was broken up only by the occasional view of a ghost town some miles away. Aria purposefully avoided the abandoned villages, claiming they were hubs of Nightmare activity. Every once in a while, Hiccup and the others could have sworn that they saw lumbering hulks and strange shadows flitting in between dead trees and yellow hills.

After a few days, the peak of a single, large mountain could be seen rising above the trees. The mountain more resembled a colossal hill, but it was a refreshing sight, especially all the green of the small forest surrounding it.

"That is Mount Aloceenia, the home of my village," Aria told the others. "This mountain is the start of the trail to Bahamut's shrine. We should be in the village tomorrow."

"Yes," the captain of their escort agreed, "but it's starting to get dark. We should set up camp now."

By the time darkness fell, the company had a fire roaring around which they all sat. The first shift of picket guards stood in a circle at the edge of the fire's light. They sat and talked amongst themselves, enjoying the last of their rations. They planned on acquiring more in the village the next day.

Hiccup laughed at a joke one of the Vikings told. He looked around at their troop, and noticed Aria sitting by herself, staring blankly into the fire. He got up and walked around to sit next to her. She jumped slightly when he sat down.

"I have a question I'd like you to answer," Hiccup told her.

"Go ahead," Aria said to the dirt.

"Why are you helping us?"

Aria was silent for a moment before she answered, "When my former master came to our village, we were on the verge of dying. Almost all of the other Aloceanian settlements were already destroyed. Our people were starving and hundreds were dying every day from Nightmare attacks. When he came, the attacks stopped. He said he was using the power of the shrine to protect us. But, he also said that this wouldn't last forever. He told us that he needed someone to come with him, that there was a single person to blame for all of this. I volunteered to be his pupil. He trained me to kill this man responsible, who he said was you." She looked up at him for a response, but Hiccup only motioned for her to continue. "The Aloceanian people are very honorable. We have strict codes of honor that are always followed, even in war. When he kidnapped your children, he broke the code. Then, he abandoned me and I got to see that you aren't a bad person after all. There's no way you could be responsible for this."

Hiccup was about to thank her, but the company fell silent when a howl a short ways off into the darkness got their attention. Everyone got to their feet, drawing their weapons. The dragons growled at the

darkness as they moved to protect their humans. The sentries had their spears ready as they faced the dark.

Suddenly, one guard's scream rent the air as he was dragged out of sight. His screams transformed into gurgled groans that accompanied sickening ripping sounds. With his last groan, the group was surrounded by silence. Then, a dozen wickedly curved spikes on sinewy tentacles came racing out of the black shadows.

Firedrake unleashed a stream of flame that caught all of the spikes. As their smoldering ends retreated back to their origin another, much closer howl was heard. They could just barely make out a giant shadowy mass before the Nightmare emerged from the darkness. It hit one of the guards with the back of its massive mottled hand, sending him into the air.

However, the Monstrous Nightmare covered himself in flames and tackled the carapace-encased humanoid. As the two wrestled on the ground, two more Nightmares emerged from the darkness. The soldiers rushed forward to meet them. Several died as the spikes on the monster's backs lashed out on their tentacles. A few others met their fate at the end of the bladed arm the Nightmares had. A few managed to break through, stabbing and slashing at the gray biological armor encasing the monsters. They did not stop, but booked it as far from the creatures as possible after delivering a single blow.

The first Nightmare managed to gain the advantage in its wrestle. It pinned Firedrake to the ground, readying its sword-arm to strike. However, it looked up at the sound a crazed battle cry and took a full on blow to the face by Snotlout's mace. It ate a face full of dirt and rolled into a crouched position, its bladed appendage ready. It just started to charge when Firedrake recovered and gave it a mighty blast to the chest. The Nightmare was thrown onto its back, and instantly the dragon was on top of it. Firedrake brought his head back and unleashed a torrent of flame, thoroughly frying the monster's head.

The second Nightmare cornered a large group of men with its spikes. The men were numerous enough to defend themselves against the many deadly tentacles. The monster was focused upon them, not seeing Pisces approach from behind. One swipe from the dragon brought it onto its back, severing a few of the tentacles. The Nightmare roared up at the Hideous Zippleback, which was not a good idea. As soon as its roar started, one of Pisces' heads poured a gaseous cloud into the open maw. The monster coughed as it inhaled the smoke, which was quickly ignited by the other head. There was a flash of light and fire as the Nightmare's body heaved, then lay still upon the ground.

Between Hiccup, Astrid, Toothless, Prince, and a few guards, the third Nightmare was quickly put on the defensive. Its blows were parried, and its spiked tentacles were quickly severed. Both of the dragons readied their own attacks, but Prince struck first. The Nightmare died as dozens of spikes drove into its head. It fell over, causing Toothless' fireball to soar over it, acting as a sort of flare.

What it revealed struck terror in everyone's hearts. Dozens of Nightmares, accompanied by their highly flammable, mindless ex-human minions, surged through the darkness towards them. Their speed

increased as the flame burst in midair, granting the humans and dragons a temporary view of the number of their foes.

"Everyone get to your horses or dragons! We must make for the village!" Aria called as she mounted her horse.

The others followed suit. The dragons rose high into the air as over a hundred hooves beat against the dead earth. Hiccup quickly gathered his friends into a formation as they banked around to bombard the beasts pursuing them.

"Alright everyone, be careful. Stay out of range of their spikes," Hiccup advised his friends as they moved into a slight dive. Fire lit the night as the dragons bombed the Nightmares and their minions. The flames made their targeting easier, allowing the Vikings and their companions to more accurately rain fire down on their enemies. A brilliant display of smoke and flames followed behind the horsemen, marking the position of the horde.

With every pass, droves of tentacles rose to meet the dragons, but they were out of reach. Once, a Nightmare jumped into the air, almost grabbing Prince by the foot with its muscled hand. It fell short, and all it earned was a shower of spikes from the Nadder's tail.

The horses were slowly proving to be faster than the Nightmares. The sky was starting to take on a bluish hue when at last the horses raced into the small, lush forest that sat at the mountain's base. The Nightmares stopped short of the forest, as if unable to enter. They stood and howled at their prey as it escaped into the trees.

The sky grew steadily brighter as the company raced up the trail to the top of the mountain. When at last the horses reached the gates of the large village, the first rays of the sun peeked over the horizon. The gates opened and they were allowed inside, moving to the large village square where a large number of Aloceanians were already gathering. Some of them cried out and shrank away in fear as the dragons touched ground.

"What is the meaning of this?" A large man with a short, brown beard demanded as he emerged from the crowd, flanked by guards on both sides. He wore a silver armored breastplate over a green and brown tunic. His green pant legs disappeared in high leather boots. A brown cape billowed about behind him. One hand rested on the sheath of a sword on his belt as he continued forward.

"Who are you and what are you doing here?" the man demanded.

"Father!" The man's eyes widened in shock as Aria emerged from the group.

"Aria?" He sounded like he didn't believe what he was seeing, "Aria, it's you! What are you doing here?" Her father asked as he threw his arms around her.

Aria stepped away from him and motioned to the group behind her, "These are my friends, including the famous Vikings of Berk. They've come a long way seeking Arastar, who kidnapped their children and abandoned me. We think he may have taken them to the shrine."

The man's gaze was both softened and surprised as he recognized the people before him. He bowed as he spoke to them, "My apologies. I am Akal, chief of the Aloceanians. I was amongst those you led against the Magus those many years ago. Welcome to my city, though I wish our meeting was under different circumstances. The care of children is one of our strongest laws. I am sorry for what Arastar has done. We will be more than happy to help in any way possible."

"Thank you," Hiccup said, coming forward to shake Akal's hand. "We would like a place to rest and food to eat for now if that is not too much to ask."

"Not at all," Akal answered, "Please, this way."

It's done! Sorry this took so long, I was almost done and then my computer wigged out and completely erased the file. I was pissed, so I didn't work on it for a little bit. I won't take as long with the next one. Please keep reviewing! Your reviews are awesome!

Dark Guymelef

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Evil Plot

"So, you seek to enter the shrine?" The Aloceanian ruler asked out loud to the group seated at the large wooden table. Hiccup, Astrid, their closest friends, Ivan, the captain of their escort, and Aria were seated at the table with him. Having finished a nice meal that somewhat reminded the Vikings of home, they were discussing the reason for the Vikings' visit.

"We don't have much to go on," Hiccup told their host, "but it's our only clue."

The Lost Continent native looked down at the table before looking back to his guests. "Only those chosen by Bahamut himself can enter the shrine. There isn't a being alive who has seen it happen. But it never hurts to try. We'll perform the ritual tonight and see if one of you is chosen."

"What ritual?" Fishlegs asked.

"It's how we request to enter the shrine," Aria answered.

And so it was that Akal gathered the villagers together in the town square. The travelers stood back and watched as for two hours they stacked large planks of wood in the middle of the large space. As night fell, several men approached the pile with torches. Several others began pound on drums as the men marched toward the wood. In unison they reached the tall stack of wood and set it alight. The flames quickly scoured all across the dry wood and shot high into the air.

The drums picked up their pace as others began dancing and chanting around the massive bonfire. The large flames crackled, sending small specks of bright ash into the air. A large column of smoke rose high

above the village while the Vikings watched this spectacle.

A sudden gust of wind blew through the village, carrying upon it what sounded like a dragon's roar. The flames spat as the smoke at the top formed a massive dragon. Bizarre above all, Hiccup's face suddenly appeared in the flames. The Aloceanians turned to stare at him in awe. The village elder, an old and decrepit man, leaned heavily upon his large cane as he pointed to the young man.

"The great Bahamut has spoken. He has chosen you, Hiccup, and you alone to enter his presence. Hurry, you must go. One must not keep the Dragon King waiting!"

Hiccup was led to the edge of the village. From there, they could see all across a lush, green valley to the large, castle-like shrine set into the mountain side. Hiccup gave Astrid a squeeze of the hand and a quick kiss before starting on the trail down the mountain.

His trip was quiet and uneventful. He walked the whole night through, giving him much time to think upon a wide variety of things. This forest seemed almost like a whole other world when compared to what they'd traveled through to get here. When at last he saw the shrine through a break in the trees, the sky was already lighting up. He emerged from the forest and started up the wide steps up to the tall stone doors beneath the large dragon head that jutted from the face of the shrine's outer wall. Just as he reached the doors, the sun peaked over the mountains, blinding him with its light.

When his eyes finally adjusted to the sudden light, a voice came from the shrine itself, "Welcome, Chosen of Bahamut. Enter the hall of the Dragon King."

The stone shook and rumbled as the doors slowly swung inward. Hiccup stepped into a very large room that contained a stone staircase in the center leading to a second floor. Two sets of stone doors were on the main floor on either side of the room, and light flooded in on either side of the staircase from openings to another room on the main floor. Unsure of exactly how he knew where to go, Hiccup ascended the staircase, approaching another set of stone doors at the top.

The doors opened to reveal a catwalk that crossed a large empty room to more doors on the other side. Above the next set of doors was a large, circular window from which the light flooded the chamber and out into the entry hall through the openings on the ground floor. Hiccup walked across the cobblestone bridge to the doors, noting the beautifully crafted silver knockers made to look like dragon heads. Once again, the doors slid open of their own accord.

Hiccup entered the largest chamber yet. It was round, with two dark corners behind dragon statues on either side near the doors. High in the far wall was another massive circle of light, though this one contained a design of a dragon in its center.

The room's main feature was a massive statue of a dragon standing on its hind legs. The statue was extremely tall, reaching to just below the window. Surprisingly, Nordic symbols that Hiccup could easily read were carved into the base of the statue on which the dragon stood. They read, "Bahamut the Dragon King."

"Welcome, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III," the deep, majestic voice seemed to reverberate from the very walls themselves, thoroughly startling Hiccup. The Viking jumped back, looking about for the source of the voice, his heart suddenly pounding.

"Who's there?" Hiccup asked.

This time the voice came from the massive statue, "Do not worry, young Viking. I am Bahamut, the King of the Dragons."

"But, you're a statue!" Hiccup exclaimed.

"Yes," the powerful voice was not phased, "My body was petrified to protect it from the evil I guard. Now I speak to you as a spirit. A great evil has come to this world, young Viking. It seeks an ancient power to rival that of the Gods. I have called you here to remove it from this place, for it is no longer safe here."

A sword appeared in the air between Hiccup and the statue. Its blade and handle were ash-black. It looked like bright red cracks ran up and down the blade, from which an eerie red glow was emitted. Each end of the handle had a horned skull carved into it, with another one set in the base of the hilt. The sword's mere presence made Hiccup's stomach churn.

"Why me? What would I do with it?" The young Viking asked the dragon.

"Only the pure in heart can open the doors to this shrine. This is a requirement, as only the pure in heart can resist the evil affects of this sword. Hiccup, it must never be allowed to fall into evil's hands."

Hiccup walked forward and grabbed the hilt of the sword. It was surprisingly heavy, far too heavy to be effective in combat. Hiccup looked down at the thing in disgust. Its evil filled the air like a thick steam.

Then, Hiccup heard a low cackle and the sound of clapping from the shadowed corner to his left. Slowly, a figure in a black hood stepped into the light, the hood hiding his face. He continued to clap as he stepped between the Viking and Bahamut.

"You!" Bahamut's voice was filled with surprise.

"Silence dragon!" The hooded figure snapped, He waved his palm towards the statue, and there was an odd sound, followed by silence. The figure then turned back to Hiccup, "You know, Hiccup, I was starting to think you weren't going to show up. But you did, so thank you. I could've blasted down the doors, but I would have been incapable of making the sword appear. I'll have that now if you don't mind." He reached out his hand for Hiccup to hand the accursed weapon to him. His voice was deep, and seemed to echo. It was a voice that Hiccup found to be vaguely familiar, like something that lurked in his deepest nightmares.

The Viking took a step back, "Who are you? And where are my children?" His face was hard, showing that he was not going to give up the sword willingly.

"You wound me, Hiccup," the man mocked as he slowly reached up and pulled his hood down. Hiccup took another step back and gasped, his blood running cold. Aries stood before him, his red eyes piercing Hiccup to his very soul. His skin was bleached white, and his face looked slightly thinner than Hiccup remembered, but there was no mistaking him. Aries smiled as he continued, "Don't you remember me?"

"You're supposed to be dead," Hiccup replied through gritted teeth.

"Ah, yes," Aries appeared to be very nonchalant about the whole thing, "You see, not even all the power of Hel can keep me bound. In fact, Hel's residents now obey my command. Now," he reached his black gloved hand again, "how about that sword."

Hiccup brought the sword behind him, "I'll never give it to you."

"Hmm," the pale man pretended to be thoughtful as he took a couple steps around the Viking, "I know! How about we make a trade? The sword for," he snapped his fingers, causing a shadowy image like a window to appear in the air, "your children."

Hiccup stared at his children as they looked about from behind the bars of some sort of cage. They did not seem to see him, as they never once looked in his direction. His heart almost felt frozen when he turned back to his nemesis, "How do I know you'll let them go?"

"Oh please," Aries rolled his eyes, "as soon as you hand me the sword I'll release them to their mother. I've had enough of the little rotten headaches. But, if you don't give that to me I'll simply kill you, take the sword, and then kill them."

Hiccup was torn, but his love for his children and his parental instincts as a father won out. Very slowly, he offered the hilt of the sword to his enemy. Aries ripped it from his hand, twirling it around like it was weightless. He made a few practice swings with it before holding it out in front of him. The undead villain smiled and closed his eyes as black and red smoke flowed out of the blade, down around his arm, and disappeared into his chest.

"What about my children?" Hiccup demanded.

Aries appeared slightly shocked at first, like he'd forgotten Hiccup was there, "Oh yes, that's right." He snapped his fingers and the window vanished. Hiccup saw the air in front of him distort for half a second before his head was suddenly rocked with pain so great it brought him to his knees.

Aries laughed as he twirled the sword about, walking in a circle around the crippled Viking. "Tell me, do you know what this sword is Hiccup?" Hiccup just made a painful groan as his head continued to throb. "No? Well, let me tell you then. You see, this sword is the best kept secret of the gods. Long ago, shortly after Odin created man, the gods were attacked by a powerful demon. Their battle was fierce, and the gods were forced to retreat. They regrouped here, on this continent, and made their last stand. Their fight turned this place into a barren wasteland. Finally, the gods defeated the demon,

but couldn't kill him. Instead, they imprisoned his soul in this sword, and place it here, for Bahamut to guard. Then, to further hide it from the world, they concealed the continent. The Nightmares are the spawn of this sword's evil. When one can control its power, they become a power to rival the gods. However, if the power is too great, the wielder will go insane and die. That is why it was actually a part of my plan for you to kill me. My powers increased and now that I'm technically already dead, I can control the sword's power."

Hiccup groaned in pain again, getting his foe's attention, "Hey, are you even listening?" Aries kicked Hiccup in the chest, hard. He flipped onto his back, the new pain in his chest telling him at least a couple of his ribs were cracked. Aries grabbed him by the hair, lifting him back onto his knees. The pained Viking eyed the black blade as Aries waved it in front of him.

"With this blade, I will overthrow Odin and rule the entire universe. Too bad you won't live to see the new world I'll create." He threw Hiccup back on his chest, breaking one of the cracked ribs. "Don't worry, I won't kill you right now. You deserve a death far worse than that, but what is more fitting?" The evil warlord thought for a moment before a thought occurred to him. Hiccup could hear the sadistic excitement in his voice as he grabbed the brunette Viking by the hair again so that he was looking into the paler man's face, "I know a death that will be perfect. How about death by overwhelming guilt; the guilt of knowing that the people most important to you were murdered by your very own hand?"

Hiccup's aching head suddenly burned like it was on fire. His suffering was so great he felt delusional. The last thing his brain computed was Aries' cold, maniacal laugh before everything went black.

And cliffhanger! Thanks for being so patient, I had some problems and didn't spend a whole lot of time on the computer. The next chapter will be up next week. Please review!

Dark Guymelef

End
file.